

for 11/1/61

Presidential Diplomacy

Mr. Johnson has some warrant for the feeling attributed to him that his Administration's record in foreign affairs is not adequately appreciated abroad. Whether this record is more important than the cooperation between Congress and the Administration in domestic legislation, as he is said to believe, is for history to judge. What the United States does to make the Great Society work in civil rights and the campaign against poverty has an important bearing upon its reputation in the eyes of others. But on the really big problems of foreign affairs, particularly Vietnam, the Administration also is making history and certainly deserves high marks.

To a considerable degree this is now becoming understood, at least among our friends. There is growing acknowledgment that President Johnson is a man of wisdom and caution as well as firmness. His many efforts to find a basis for negotiations on Vietnam, for example, have percolated into foreign consciousness and have nicely complemented his determination to prevent Communist conquest and to meet the issue of Communist-sponsored "wars of national liberation." One may suspect that his combination of courage and restraint is understood very well in the Kremlin.

Similarly on the Dominican Republic, the other issue about which Mr. Johnson is said to feel strongly, there is little disposition outside Latin America to quarrel with the basic decision to intervene on the basis of the information he had at the time. Even in Latin America itself, the complaint is not so much about the objective as about the method of the intervention and the fact that it apparently was not thought through or carried to its logical conclusion. Mr. Johnson could have avoided some of the protests by informing other

heads of government of what he was doing. But, the hypersensitivity of the Administration to criticism apart, it probably has done no net harm and perhaps has done some good to demonstrate that the United States will not tolerate the imposition of another Castroite regime.

Of course not all acts of the Administration in foreign affairs have been skillful. Mr. Johnson was not at his best, for instance, in exhibiting personal pique with Canadian Prime Minister Pearson over the latter's ill-advised speech in Philadelphia. Likewise, the manner in which the President canceled the visits of Pakistani President Ayub and Indian Prime Minister Shastri was scarcely gracious. But these were relatively minor blots on a constructive record.

In a sense President Johnson has been competing with the image of President Kennedy abroad. Mr. Johnson had not displayed any great interest in foreign policy before he succeeded to the White House. His acknowledged mastery was in domestic legislation, and people in other countries can hardly be blamed if they did not immediately regard him as an expert in foreign affairs.

The near-idolization of Mr. Kennedy may exaggerate his practical accomplishments, but what he unquestionably managed to convey was a sense of empathy. Paradoxically, although he may lack this empathy, Mr. Johnson has been considerably more realistic about what has been possible in Europe, particularly since the eruption of the feud with President de Gaulle and the collapse of the American-made Grand Design.

Fundamentally, what the Johnson Administration has done and is doing in foreign affairs commands increasing respect. That, rather than adulation, is the proper objective. It is a human failing to want to be loved; but in foreign affairs, with all the hard and often displeasing decisions they involve, universal love is unattainable. It is enough for a great nation and its leader to be respected.